

# RAD DAD



★ First Printing ★

cover letterpress printed by artnoose

kivel: continued from page 11

*Finally, how do you see parenting as political?*

Well some people like to see parenting as kind of a tug of war: pulling my kid to my values away from whatever we're scared of and it's a constant struggle. Or we can see that it is not a tug of war and that our kids are growing up trying to figure out what's going on and make their own decisions and they need somebody there as an ally to stand with them and help them develop the capacity to think well about what's going on. That's a pretty radical place to be with young people: to actually trust them in that capacity, to be an ally and not a protector or some other role, to just help them be who they are, to believe that whatever they are is fine. This doesn't mean they don't make mistakes or need help and this view isn't an excuse for fathers to be absent, but it's an opening to be really present with them rather than our past, our pressures, our fears.

24

## what we value

by tomas

This time, making rad dad 3 felt like having my third kid: welcome, familiar, surrounded by family and friends. It was made that way by all the encouragement I got from strangers about hope, from new friends like vikki and china and artnoose who remind me that art can save, from family showing me that what we value is what we choose to: empty boxes, stories, bed time, that what alice walker says is so true, "we alone can devalue gold...this could be our revolution: to love what is plentiful as much as what is scarce." I keep this sentiment close as I walk my kids to school, as I sense that the time I am blessed to spend with them as well as everyone else ticks on and on. Enjoy what is in front of you ...

p.s. send stuff in for number 4 out in july...

back issues of 1 and 2 (w/o the cool cover, sorry) are available for \$2 + postage:

tom\_moniz@riseup.net  
1636 fairview st  
berkeley, ca 94703



## storytelling

by tomas

Parenting starts with a story:

My grandma, worried that her 3-year old son had not spoken a word yet, had him chase down a grasshopper. Diligently, without complaint, the boy did and returned with a smile. Open she said; confused but without hesitation, he opened wide. Wide. She shoved it in and closed his mouth. "Hablas, mijo, hablas." He spit it out crying. Crying and yelling. He has not stopped either since she says and smiles thinking of her now 50 year old son talking his time away in a New Mexican state penitentiary.

This is my father. He smiles when he tells this story now on a snowy day to my children in his trailer on the outskirts of town. He has been out of jail for a year now. My kids look to me for guidance. Do we believe? I can only smile. Teasing, my father says, "What, mija, you don't believe me? Come here, I'll tell you more."

I realize this is so central to my parenting. Stories. But I did not know this when I became a father. I didn't know those afternoons or early mornings when my partner had to leave to culinary school and I had to discover what to do for the next eight hours that I was talking to both my newborn son and myself. I was showing us the way. I was imagining the path home. Telling myself, telling my son that success is possible, that despite my fear, my ignorance, my loneliness this path was traversable. It's the stories that we tell each other that create connections, that foster empathy, that teach.

But we aren't the only ones telling tales. I see now how storytelling works in a cultural, social level as well; how myths of capitalism, christianity, patriarchy are told over and over and over until our kids tell them back to





each other while at play, to their teachers in their homework, to us if we listen during those tucking ins at bed time or in the quiet hours when we wake up together in our bed. This is linguistic terrorism. I have also come to see how it's these cultural stories that impact our kids more than any one thing can, more than parents, more than teachers.

My daughter, combing her hair in the morning, sulks away from the mirror saying her hair is ugly. Who taught her that beauty standard because no amount "oh no it doesn't, honey" is gonna change her view in that moment. My other daughter informing her sister as they play in the car that if she ever lives with a boy then she has to have sex with him. "Really, why?" my partner asks. "Because." As if that explains it. We need stories to counter these. We need heroes, legends, rituals that offer other narratives,



other examples of how to look, how to live, what should be valued, what holds meaning, what it means to be alive.

Because that shit works; the other day my son, who used to be a vegetarian for the last five years (on his own accord) but now laughs at that *Super Size Me* film not because of what it's saying, but that it took the guy twenty whole minutes to eat his meal and then he puked. "Hella stoopid. I'd eat two in ten minutes," my son brags. As if it's something to be proud of. My son whose biggest dream right now is to own a scraper to cruise through south Berkeley bumpin bass because it looks tight. Yes that's my son, but so is this. My son taking his 2 year old cousin by the hand for a walk in the back yard and she picks up a worm. He asks her has she ever heard the story about Ella who ate a big ol' worm when she was a baby thinking it was a cheeto. "Ever since then," he says, "Ella is a little animal lover. I think it's the worm inside her." They laugh and laugh. I can only smile. I don't know what it means, what the moral is, but I know my son is gonna make it. In his own way and on his own terms. He's gonna survive

I scoured the internet for days, turning up only vague message-board references and a few scant articles. Bare bones to be sure. But there were thousands of mama 'zines and resources for young mothers, articles, essays, books, talk fathers? What about the some community and about the punk papas, the socialist papas, the papas who never get to work or custody battles thrown up by a society the symptoms and not problems? What about helped?

a pirate papa  
is any father  
who struggles  
against those  
accepted and  
enforced  
norms

shows. What about the single dads and creating resources for them? What the anarcho-green papas, homosexual papas, the see their kids because of or some other barrier willing to focus only on the root causes of its the papas who no one ever

Where are our shelves upon shelves of books? Where are our homemade 'zines? Where are our legions of social workers? I always hear everyone talk about how rough young mothers have it and it's true. But our society is geared towards creating more young mothers than it is young fathers and the pieces will only start clicking into place when we stop effectively ignoring half of the equation and start fostering a truly egalitarian system of parental education in this "great nation."

Check him out at [www.piratepapa.blogspot.com](http://www.piratepapa.blogspot.com)

adam: continued from page 21

examples of anti-racism, sex positivity, feminism, and solidarity as it is about choosing which sling to use, staying up *all* night with a screaming, colicky 3 week-old, understanding vaccinations and being prepared to have those conversations with whatever pediatrician, and sleeping with baby in bed next to you. In short, everything that parenting is about is what being specifically a dad is about, and though this may *seem* obvious in hindsight, it didn't before, and I think that says as much about sexism as it does about fathering in the patriarchy.

SO, thanks to Tomas for all his hard work on this worthy project. In the next issue will be my advice and support for all you dads (and moms) who are living with the dreaded Colicky Baby!

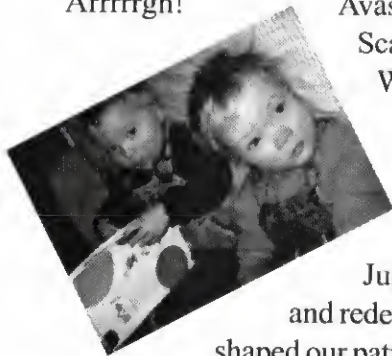


## pirate papa

by sky cosby

*One of the best things about get this zine going has been the amazing people I've had a chance to chat with, exchange emails with, plan the destruction of patriarchy with, share stories about our failures and our inspirations with. Sky Cosby is no exception. Now I'm not the best with technology, but if I were to do a blog, I'd hope mine had the inspiration, the humor, the honesty, the politics of pirate papa. Here are his posted explanations about why he started and what he hopes to do: join him or walk the plank...*

Arrrrrgh!



Avast ye scurly scallywags, this be Lyli & Scarleht. We abide oustide o' Shelton, Washington at the spiralest-most inside tip of the glorious Sound of Puget. Hungry Hollow Farm has been 'ere since 1888 but we hav'n't. We've only been 'ere since June of '04, on the farm since July '05. We hang out with our papa all day and redefine the societal paradigms that have shaped our patriarchal, war-mongering, greedy world

and read tons of books and are learning to say 'chicken'. Oh, and if you were curious, a Pirate Papa is any father who struggles against those accepted and ruthlessly enforced norms on any miniscule level of the spectrum; it's any counter-culture papa caught in the mainstream who fights back against what the 'greater good' is telling them to do and forges their own path through the wilderness of fatherhood in a papaphobic sea of guilt and past mistakes; really it's any papa who cares about their kids, their partner and themselves more than what someone else thinks of their decisions and lifestyle. Life can be grand if you invest the time to make it so. Just sit back and do whatever it is the moment calls for. And let's not be so lonely, eh? How about a little father's forum?



all the lies that are forced on him and so many others like him. All the bullshit he's asked to believe or buy in to.

What are the stories you need to tell? What do you share with your child, your lovers, your family and friends?

Our strongest weapons are our stories, the stories we tell our children, the ones we whisper to each other in beds of our own making, the myths that fill our imaginations shared among conspirators at bars or over camp fires or sitting in jail cells. It is those weapons we must employ over and over to create the world we want. I have realized that of all the things that give my life meaning it has been the spoken visions of the future or the shared memories of the past that sustain me in the present, that nurture my growth, my will, my determination. In stories, truth doesn't matter, facts become fictitious, desire and purpose mold the outcome. If I need to hear stories of survival, if I need to find inspiration, if I need to laugh and laugh and laugh, I need only open my mouth, need only to sit with someone close and say 'tell me a story.' Here is one of my favorites to tell my kids when they ask why I do what I do. And I swear it is all true.



At 20, a few months before the birth of my son, I hitchhiked from Las Vegas, New Mexico down the highway to the State Penitentiary just outside of Santa Fe to see my father face to face. To try to find some answers, to perhaps find guidance. He tells me he fucked up. He should be out there with me, working with me, living life with me. "Because," he says, "I realized I'm a slave in here. And now I can only fight against other slaves. But if I was out there with you, when I realized I was a slave, I coulda done something, I coulda fought back at least. Somehow. In here, it's just fucked up. All you can do is write and fight."

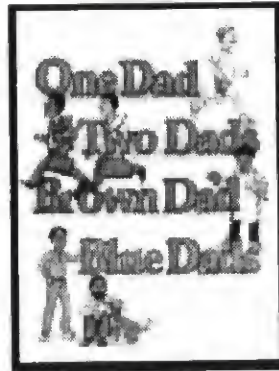
My father explained that in jail, pencils are like daggers, you can write and you can stab. "Mira," he points to his hand, "here are the pencil tips that I cannot get out."

Welcome to rad dad.



## breaking down heteronormativity by patrick

As a bisexual father who is currently in a long-term opposite-gender partnership, I had been troubling over how to introduce queer relationships to my 2 1/2 year-old son. While there are undoubtedly family friends who would model same-gender couplehood for Rohan, he currently has no regular or significant gays and lesbians in his life. It seemed like it would be better to begin introducing the idea of queerness now then wait until my son is 6 and then try to explain to him why I might be going on a date with a man. I figured the best thing to do was to normalize the topic by bringing it into storytime. So I turned to AK Press and ordered two titles by Johnny Valentine.



The first, *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* is, as you can imagine, a play on Dr. Suess' *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. The twist is that the story's protagonist, a young boy named Lou, has two dads that are blue. Lou patiently explains to his friend that being "blue" doesn't stop his dads from doing any of the things that normal dads do. While the artwork

is cute and the rhyming prose is fun, the cadence sometimes falls off and the "blueness = queer" point seemed to be lost on my son. Possibly this book will work a little bit better in a few years but for now it was a bit of a flop.

In contrast, Valentine's *The Daddy Machine* has been quite the success and is a solid new favorite. In this story a brother and sister with two moms decide to build a daddy machine so that they can experience having a father. Unfortunately, their machine works too well and quickly floods their

home with dozens of dads. Through some creative daddy tinkering, the problem is solved and two "gentle-hearted" dads decide to move in

there are no  
bears or  
leather  
papas, let  
alone butch  
dykes to be  
found

## what do I know about being a dad by adam

So when I first picked up rad dad #1 and 2, I was excited and thought it was a great project, and I wanted to contribute. But almost as quickly, I realized that I had *nothing* to say that I imagined could be remotely valuable.

Even more daunting, the zine was by, for and about dads. I am a joyously new dad to a 6 month old baby boy, and as little as I knew about parenting, I knew even less about the specific experience of being a dad.

I mean, being a dad, just like being a mom, is all wrapped up in all kinds of gendered crap. The traditional patriarchal papa role wasn't for me (or my son) I was sure, and though I felt confident that I had an intuitive sort of understanding of what I wanted to model and impart to my son *as a man*, I was having a hard time coming up with words or thinking that they could be valuable.

I voiced these concerns to my partner who pointed me to the pages of Rad Dad which talked about so many other dads who felt the same way I did. It was a flash of revelation.

And then, she went on to say that there were a lot of things that I could write about that would be helpful to other dads. Like: parenting a colicky baby, cloth diapering, co-sleeping with baby, having a home birth and being a supportive birth partner, the challenges of public nursing in the Midwest, baby wearing, and learning about the controversies surrounding vaccinations.

AMAZINGLY to me, though I had done all of these things, I had not thought of *any* of them as part of my "fatherhood" experience. I filed them all under "parenting". WTF!? This shit was way more gendered than I'd realized, and the patriarchal papa was already colonizing my mind. Argh!

So, with this newfound insight, I will proceed to write on my experience with all these topics, (maybe not all in this issue) and as I learn more, write more. But for this piece, I want to emphasize that fatherhood, dad-dom, as a radical and just as a person, is as much about challenging gender roles, challenging male violence, and making an effort to set

continued on page 23



Abe and Sam's sheer enthusiasm is enough to drive at least one person from the back row, and their contest to get the prized window seat causes another couple of back-seaters to hastily seek calmer territory. Once the jostling for seats stops, an unending series of questions and reports of what's going on in or outside the bus begins. I enjoy the cavalcade of commentary; I am equally amused by the reactions of people around us. Their expressions range from amused complicity to annoyance. Outwardly, the kids appear to be oblivious to the other passengers' reactions, but subconsciously I think they learn that there are lots of different kinds of people in our community.

High on the hill, we disembark from the bus, amble to the park entrance, and begin a scramble up one of the trails through the woods. Along the way we engage in a stick fight, sample wild berries, and take a few tumbles (well Abe does, anyway).

Despite what seem like dozens of diversions along the way, we reach the top of Mt. Tabor, where one can take in a panoramic view of the city. My eyes scan the streets for familiar landmarks, while my brain maps out memories of these places. Abe and Sam have little interest, understanding, or need for the big picture I'm taking in. They're running beneath the trees, chasing squirrels, and throwing acorns.

As I watch them, I realize that there are many ways of teaching our kids. Sometimes I do this with statements about good and bad. More often it's through a kind of parent-kid osmosis. I'd like for them to observe the actions of others, to listen to the sounds of conversations or arguments, and to really taste the place they live. By exploring the people and places in our own neighborhood the kids not only learn about their community, they soak up the memories that will someday form their own mental maps.



together next door. I think that the combination of a stronger text, bright artwork and a simpler concept has made this book Rohan's choice.

While I commend Valentine for these books and appreciate the multiracial/ethnic representation of dads, I am critical of the universally thin and middle-class composition of the queer folks presented. Also, there are no bears or leather-papas, let alone butch dykes or gender-bending trannies to be found. It's important to show that same-gender

relationships can be "normal" without conforming to a traditional heteronormativity that erases important queer differences. The point is not to create a caricatured version of queerness but to show that same-gender relationships don't have to look "straight".

These points aside, I recognize that there is no overabundance of queer-themed children's literature and Valentine should be applauded for helping to fill in the gap. These books can serve as useful talking pieces for Rad Dads



addressing the issue of diversity in relationships while simultaneously showing the commonalities of family and love.

One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads

Written by Johnny Valentine & Illustrated by Melody Sarecky

Los Angeles: Alyson Wonderland, 1994

The Daddy Machine

Written by Johnny Valentine & Illustrated by Lynette Schmidt

Los Angeles: Alyson Wonderland, 2004

same  
gendered  
relationships  
don't have to  
look  
"straight"



## finding father figures by clayton

I usually don't cry in movies. It takes a certain kind of film - one where I can really identify or at least believe the characters to the point where I almost feel what they're going through. This was one of those movies. It shook me to my core. By the end I was crying a cry that came from my whole body. Suffice it to say that for me it wasn't the typical movie.

Since seeing *Finding Neverland* for the first time I haven't gone back for a second viewing. I'm sure I'll start to see the flaws and develop my critiques of it, but as of now I feel like the movie is incredible.

It's funny that I would find so much power from a Hollywood movie, not to mention one that is Peter Pan, one that is rife In fact, I've felt that the one that plagues many an ment. Still, for reasons movie in my mind is a

6

The movie tells the author - J.M. Barrie, a while working on a script comes across a group of boys. Pretty soon they're all playing a game of imagination and all having a great time. From then on their adventures in the park become a sort of routine for each of them.

Eventually Barrie meets their now widowed mother, Sylvia Llewyn-Davies. They of course fall for each other from their time spent together and the boys, even the embittered Peter accept Barrie into their lives. Despite already living a life of wealth and prestige Barrie eventually breaks an unhappy marriage to be with them and take care of the boys and their now ailing mother.

I guess the plot is pretty standard and predictable. Barrie and Llewyn-Davies fall in love and choose to be together despite societal disapproval. That part didn't surprise. What was a very welcomed twist for me, however, was the way Barrie approached the kids.

I hardly see men take an active part in kids' lives that aren't their own

connected to the story of with sexism and racism. Peter Pan Syndrome is an anarchist in our move-I'll go into further, the subversive one. story of Peter Pan's rich playwright. One day in London Park, he

chatter from our walk turns into a series of chimpanzee-like grunts, hoots, and shrieks (usually when someone gets struck by one of the prickly nut husks). Sam carefully shuffles through a pile of the mostly empty, brown husks and kicks the full ones over to me. I maneuver my feet to pull the husk back from the nuts, then Sam uses the tongs to transfer the nuts to Abe's stroller tray where he puts them in the tub with the nippers. "I the bucket guy!" Abe exclaims. Sam shouts, "I'm the tong guy!" I beam at my band of hunter-gatherers.

A little later we are joined by several old Asian ladies. It seems that besides us, they are the only ones who know of the treasures to be found beneath the trees. I try to ask some of them what they do with the chestnuts, but none speak English. I'm surprised how intently the kids observe these women, but despite their close proximity to us, neither Abe or Sam ever ask about them.

Soon our tub is full. Although none of us particularly like chestnuts, the joy of doing something so primal together drives us to go out again the next day; I think the presence of other "competitors" validates our efforts.

On a drizzly afternoon a few weeks later, we decide to take the bus to Mount Tabor Park. It contains the city's reservoirs, trails, and woodlands on the flanks of an extinct volcano. Neither of my kids can stand still for long in the house, but when we arrive at the bus stop, they both line up patiently against the windows of Hoda's Mediterranean restaurant.

Hoda-man, one of the proprietors, sticks his head out the door to greet us and comments on how big the kids are getting. Per normal, the kids monitor the conversation, but are too shy to get involved, even though they surely recognize him.

When the bus arrives, there is a scuffle over who will get to put the bus ticket in the fare box. Sam wins and much to the amusement of the other passengers, Abe runs towards the back of the bus, ambles up the steps and charges for the last row of seats.

Anyone who rode the bus to school or has since ridden public transit knows that the back of the bus is where the characters usually hang out: the drunkard with a bag of cans, the tough guys, people who either want to be left alone or those folks you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley.



## there and back

My kids and I climb extinct volcanoes, cross raging rivers, and forage for dinner without ever leaving the city. No matter the weather, we always have a good time getting out discovering our world, be it on bike, foot, or bus: and we're making memories as well.

"Give me some gas," I urge Sam as we head back up the hill from one of our summer tandem-bike adventures down by the Willamette River. Seconds later we accelerate and I finally feel that I'm not the only one pedaling the three of us home. A quick glance over my shoulder nearly topples us, but reveals that Sam is standing as he pedals while his brother, Abe, is trying to jettison his shoes from his bicycle trailer. It's only after we stop at a wine-making street party that I realize Abe has already succeeded in tossing his socks onboard and that they are lost on the road some miles behind us.

Once Sam's curiosity about grape pressing is sated, we load up according to our usual ritual. Abe gets strapped in the trailer, I straddle the tandem, then Sam yells out, "Ready?" I repeat back, "Ready!" We both laugh and he swings onto the back seat as if he is mounting a horse. The neighbors wave and we're off again.

"Papa," Sam questions, "that was so cool. Can we get one of those wine machines?" I pause as I consider how to respond to this request from a five year old. Before I can reply, Sam has moved on to wondering why people paint their houses green, and other more esoteric questions that I find equally difficult to answer. I savor the lack of distraction and focus that occurs when our goal is motion. The conversations that we have en route are a pleasant rhythm of odd questions and observations punctuated by long, thoughtful silences.

On the other hand, a steady stream of chatter characterizes our walkabouts. On this particular day, we're on a chestnut hunt. Abe is riding in his stroller and carries a yogurt tub along with a pair of pliers that he calls "nippers"; Sam happily wields some metal cooking tongs. We head towards the park, which boasts many mature trees. As we hunt, the

## by bruce b

the joy of  
doing  
something  
so primal  
together  
drives us

From their initial meeting to the very end of the film *Barrie* acknowledged and respected the boys. When they first met in the park he didn't shoo them off or ignore them while he had to finish some important work. He also didn't enter their lives hoping to gain something from them. When they first met he knew nothing of their mother or her status. His intentions were simple- he liked and admired the kids and had fun being with them.

Beyond a fun guy, became a dependable male role model. When Peter, the youngest boy, approached it was taken in shame the boy



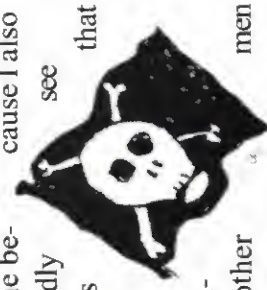
simply being just Barrie also dependable and open model. When youngest boy, Barrie with caution stride. He didn't into liking him or

force him to obey. Barrie instead proved to Peter that he was there for him and loved him unconditionally even if Peter wasn't ready to reciprocate that. Of course Peter eventually came to trust Barrie, something which can only be truly gained when we are an accountable and stable force in the lives of children. Barrie wasn't just a fun guy- he was there during the hard times too and didn't run in fear at the sight of commitment and hardship.

I think the movie struck such a chord with me because I also entered the life of a family already developed. I hardly see other men taking active parts in the lives of kids aren't their own biologically. It's even rarer that I see men taking a role I want to emulate.

All too often men are the distant figures "maintain-

ing order" in the household. I don't see many other men at playgroup or at the park or coming to see their kid's presentation at school. So, to finally see an archetype I could identify with was huge. The love that Barrie shared with Llewyn-Davies family is the kind that I admire and strive for. Let's start building a world where this is a norm, where I don't have to look to Hollywood to find examples of the kind of person I want to be.





## paul kivel: rad dad mentor

I started this zine partly to meet other fathers, other men doing parenting based on alternate forms of the patriarchal *daddy* stereotype. And to spread the word about mentors. Paul Kivel has been one of them, and his work has had a direct impact on my parenting. I can't express how much appreciation I had for his voice when I was in the midst of feeling my son was a fuck up or believing I failed, thinking everything I tried to do differently was a mistake because I should have just done what my father did to me: drop the proverbial hammer. Punish, punish punish. I remember. It was one of those weeks: I find my son ditching school, then his bike gets stolen because he forgets his lock but proceeds to leave it at the bike stalls anyways, then pot, then a call from a teacher, then his report card: all Fs after he's assured us he's doing well. Panic, depression. This was never how I imagined my relationship with my son would turn out. Enter Paul with his reassuring belief in actually trusting and talking to our children. I sought him out and sat with him one afternoon at his house in Oakland.

8

### *What has been your most humbling moment as a parent?*

Ari, my son, was about eight and we were arguing about why he couldn't do his homework at the last minute, and I was finding myself in my parents' role, and I sensed how stuck we were. I could see us for the next 10 years repeating this scenario over and over. Everything I tried didn't work and nobody taught me or told me any different, so I really had to step back and rethink these issues. I started to think about this with my other work concerning men and male socialization.

*Do you find it tough to go from theory where things make sense to practice when you're in those moments where everything's coming at you?*

Yes, but I think the key is getting clear in your intentions, getting clear on how we, my partner and I, wanted to raise our children. So making decisions ahead of time. If you haven't pre-thought it out, you're just making decisions based on your prehistory. It's important



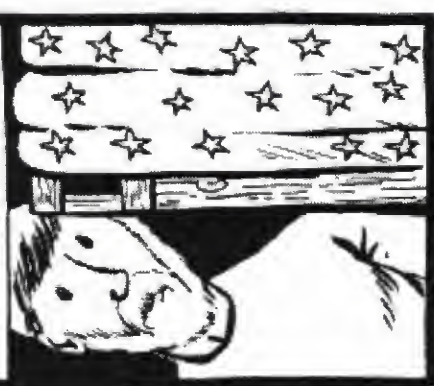


# The Whale's Eye

by matt  
dembicki



I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A GREAT WAY NOT TO BE DETECTED, BUT...



to get clear ahead of time how you want to parent, and so then you're forced to consider what the other options are.

*I do that with shaming and guilt, so when I'm not prepared that's what I revert to, and I try to remind myself to step out of those discussions or arguments, but sometimes that's hard to do with a flippant fifteen year old.*

Yes and the other part of it for me was all these expectations I had on myself about how I was supposed to be a parent from all the messages I got from society: raise perfect kids, set limits, be the disciplinarian. And so a lot of things I just fell into, and I wasn't thinking about our relationship, the quality of our connections; I was thinking of those things I'm supposed to do and that's the stuff I needed to step back from and say all that shit is not working. I want to be able to spend my evenings enjoying my kids. I don't want to be in this struggle, so that means it's not about the homework but the quality of our time.

And then the best thing was just sitting down and talking with him about how this isn't working for me and I'm assuming for him. Asking what kind of support he would like and that opened up a whole different relationship.

*So you've got two boys and a girl. How have you dealt with gender?*

Well they are each more unique and individual than they are gendered; what made a difference was all the pressures they faced, so our responsibility was to help them sort out those messages more than anything else.

*How does race play a part in your parenting. For me as a bicultural child, race was never discussed partly because my mother wasn't with my biological father for too long, but with him and his family, it's always discussed, always present.*

Race is a constant factor; it's there everyday for those of us who are white. There's no interaction that race isn't a part of even when there are no people of color present. That in and of itself is an issue. The mainstream culture is a white culture whatever the racial mix of the people.





Our job is to help them see race, see the difference it makes, and for raising white kids helping them understand the privilege and benefits of being white and what that means without feeling guilty or responsible for the system of racism but responsible for how they hold that, how they handle themselves in the world as a white person. It's an everyday discussion just as gender and class are.

*How do you see fathers as nurturers?*

I'm not even sure why that's a question; it just seems so natural.

*I agree but I always get asked about discipline so I wanna come from the other side, push that side as the key to fathering.*

Well most fathers, if they're involved, start out as nurturers and then that sense of social responsibility creeps in. The same is true for mothers. At a certain age we start getting worried about our sons: are they tough enough, are they gay, and with girls it's around issues like are they safe, are they feminine enough, so at a certain age the tendency is to be more disciplinarian and to forget that the nurturing has to be the core.

Women are encouraged to step back from boys, and men are taught to step in and ratchet up the discipline and this is all based on fear.

*That is such a huge parental issue: fear. So many people parent through fear, fear of their child's safety or of their failure. I see myself do it, like is she too young to walk to the corner store, I mean she might get stolen or something.*

If parenting isn't fear based then, if something came up that we were concerned with, we'd be able to talk to our kids and perhaps other adults and open it up to a discussion. But if it is fear based, then it's about our control, our attempt to make sure things happen the way we think they should. And that's the difference: the control or the discipline. If I'm just concerned about your safety, then let's talk about how prepared you are, what do you know about the situation, and how can we make this safe.



bart, in school, buying or selling? does he want to know my experiences with it?" We talk like this a few times over the next couple of days.

I still don't know what to do and feel lost, so I finally try to figure out what I feel I need as a parent, what I feel my responsibilities are, and just what my concerns or fears are. I tell him I don't want him doing it, and I don't think it is helping him succeed in the choices he's made for himself at this point. I tell him of my fear about how this society is ready to pounce on young men, criminalize them and their actions, and that he's already been caught for graffiti and shoplifting (*did not cause this I laugh to myself*) and soon he will be out of options. I reiterate that he needs to make his own decisions

and he needs to deal with the consequences. I kinda wanna use my line I used when I saw him looking at pornography, "if you old enough to watch it, you old enough to talk about it."

Openly and honestly. So I need him to be honest with me, to not deceive me. If I ask him, he should be truthful. Part of the

consequences of his actions is owning them, regardless of people's reactions, even his father's. I tell him that being honest doesn't mean he has no privacy. He is his own person and knows what is expected of him. If he can balance doing what he needs to do, with the other choices he wants to make, great. If he can't, then we need to rework our system; we need to question both what I expect and his choices. If we can be honest with each other now, we can learn to understand, support, disagree with each other while still maintaining our autonomy and our connection.

However, none of that will make walking into my son's room with him sit in on the bed stoned out of his mind with Mickey D wrapper's about the floor any fucking easier.





or even smoke with them. So do I let my son smoke pot any ol time? Do I say, "no, drugs are bad," like the good ol south park counselor? I know they're not. I don't smoke pot but have and will certainly do it again. Do I say, "you can do it in your room only," and then have to deal with a stoned son at dinner time? Nothing sounds good, nothing feels right. Where is my little four year old who wants pirate parties and the only thing smoking will be the tip of his little pirate pistol?

But we change. Kids grow up. They make their own decisions and must face the consequences of those decisions on their own. I tell him in the car, "I will talk to you about this later tonight when I'm not so upset." In the meantime I remind myself that I don't have all the answers. That this is so much more complex then just him smoking



pot or lying or trust. I also remind myself that my responsibility is first and foremost to let him know I love him unconditionally. I don't want my anger or my disappointment to pervade my other interactions with him. After being flat out lied to like a fool, I still must make him dinner, sit and eat with him and my daughters in a

respectful and supportive environment. This sounds obvious or simple, but it is probably the most difficult thing I have to do. To keep these things separate: my anger at one thing and my behavior to him in other areas. To not ridicule him when he comes into the kitchen announcing, "man, am I hungry," by saying, "well, that's what you get when you're a fucking pot head," or something like "it's called the munchies, stoner..."

So what are my responsibilities? Where do they end and his begin? When we do finally talk, I decide first to just ask some questions and then shut the fuck up. I want to just listen, not blame, guilt, threaten, ignore, dismiss him, his feelings, or his actions. I ask: "do you like it? how's it make you feel? do you think it affects you negatively in any way? do you know what might happen if you get caught with it on.

*How do you counter the values society forces on us and our kids. For example, I'm always shocked at how christian my kids are.*

Some of it is just being aware of it. Some of it is so obvious, but it's the subtle stuff that takes work, so it's important to get support, to develop a circle of people to talk to and time to talk to them, to step back and get help maintaining your relationships, your work, your friendships so that you're not overwhelmed by parenting,

*In my experience the radical community doesn't have a lot of parents and you kind of get the critical like 'why aren't you doing more' vibe from people when you can't commit in the same ways as non-parents.*

There's a whole new generation of young radicals having kids, and I'm interested in seeing the changes this will bring because it's always been true that the values of the radical community are pretty much non-family oriented: long meetings, no childcare, odd hours, individualism, no sense that we're collectively responsible for kids. So many people have no sense of responsibility to step out of a meeting to take care of kids so the parent can participate.

*Yeah there's a lot of people talking now about how no moment can survive that's not multigenerational and that activism and radicalism come in lots of forms including parenting. How's fathering changed you? Any suggestions for new parents or for parents like me in the midst of it.*

It's the kind of conversation I'm having with my son now who's about to become one too. Becoming a father was the most profound event that's happened in my life. There's no aspect of myself that was unchanged by it. It's changed me completely and it was the long term process of figuring out what that means, what does it mean for my partner and I to change our relationship so that we could sustain each other and raise our kids, and what did it mean to raise our kids differently than mainstream society. I don't know what to say: it's huge. It's mostly a wonderful thing but sometimes guys hear this and they get scared but it is profound and transformative; you can resist all that and spend the next 20 years fighting it or you can let that in and be transformed.

continued on page 24



## dazed and confused by tomas

I need help. I'm desperate. I'm even turning to them self-help

parenting books with names like *You Be the Boss* and *Take Back Control of Your Family* (note picture with white mother and father and grumpy looking suburban white boy). I'm looking at them and saying, 'yes! save me.' How far we fall, but when you desperate, anything's game.

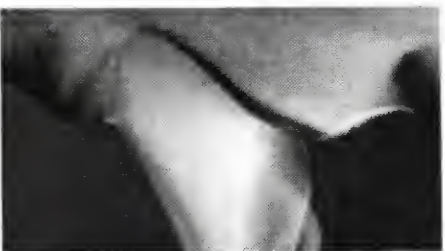
But enough with cliches; let's get to the point — as an anarchist anti-authoritarian father trying to bridge that gap between theory and practice, trying to connect my politics to the practice of living my daily life, I've never met this kinda challenge before. And it feels like I am failing. I mean being vegan in New Mexico with my entire chicano family holding out a plate full of carne asada saying 'you don't eat what?' was easier. Struggling with the reality of non-monogamy has been easier, struggling to navigate being a teacher within the cold walls of the classroom was a piece of vegan chocolate cake compared to this. My son. Beautiful. On the verge of manhood. So much energy, so much potential.

Stoned. No, not just stoned. Fucking stoned.

Not doing anything: no school work, no responsibilities around the dog, not caring about skating anymore, just wanting to be flossin a new white tee, khaki dickies, wantin clean white Nikes, talkin about gettin a grill with ice on it. But that's not the worst thing.

Lying about it. That was the clincher. I needed serious help. He seemed more comfortable making up extravagant explanations for me than talking to me about his choices, his decisions, his willingness to take the consequences if need be. Instead I got, "no really, I just took this bud from a friend cuz I didn't want him to smoke cuz, you know, drugs are bad."

Followed by his sad little smile. Help me! I was talking through this stuff with a good friend of mine and he chided me asking, "really what do you expect, him to be all 'yo pops, I'm fix to roll a fat one with me and my boys, you want in?'" Now sarcasm aside, he had a point. I pride



myself on fostering an environment in which my son and my daughters would be active participants in creating their surroundings, and this worked when every option they had was something I was comfortable with for the most part. "You wanna wear a tank top when it's raining, well try it and see," or "you wanna not eat when we're having dinner, than don't expect me to do it all again when you're hungry in a couple hours."

But there was no deception, no dishonesty in any of these situations. Until now.

"Hey dad, I need to stop by my girlfriend's house to pick up a calculator." I want him to do well, so I must help him I feel. However begrudgingly, I get all the other kids in my car, which I need to jumpstart to get going, drive there, wait an excruciating 10 minutes and then have him come in the car followed by an overpowering smell of rosehip hand soap...hmmm. A deep breath closer and sho nuff weed. I see that this was all a ploy to get some *grapes* as the slang goes in Berkeley High. I ask him does he have pot on him. No. He looks dumbfounded like why on earth would I think such a thing. I ask him to empty his pockets — out comes some of the nastiest, weak ass shank I'd ever seen. I almost asked him how much he paid for this because he got robbed. Then I hear his excuse, "I was wrestling with friends in the field, so it must be grass."

Am I that much of a fool I wonder? Is this what I get for doing what I did to my mom? I just want to ridicule him, chide him for thinking me so gullible. You know, parenting by shame.

And then it hits me. This is where politics in action collide with theory, this is the battleground where decisions made now can either reflect the parenting most of us are familiar with: parenting based on hypocrisy, blanket authoritarianism, on fucking guilt, or my choices can reflect...and that's where I'm stuck. *Or what?* How else to handle this, other than those rigid patriarchal static options — yelling screaming, shaming, threatening? Or worse yet, the banal liberal crap that I hear some people (usually non-parents) rattle off about how they'll let them smoke

